

In Memory of
U.S. Army Sergeant First Class
Gerald Burdette Bowden

Clark, South Dakota
Clark County

August 10, 1931 – July 9, 1953
Missing in Action, Presumed Dead in Korea



Gerald Burdette Bowden, known to friends and family as Burdette or Bart, was born August 10, 1931, at Mobridge, South Dakota, to Gerald and Faye (Dahlgren) Bowden. His siblings were Jerry, Kip, Nellie Mae, Geraldine, Lou Ann, Sanna, and Sheryl. He was raised and educated in Clark County. He was confirmed at the Clark Center Lutheran Church in 1946 and graduated from Clark High School in 1949. Before he entered the service, Gerald farmed with his father and worked part-time for other neighbors, helping with farm work and other chores. In March of 1952, the Bowden family moved from Clark to a farm near Madison.

On May 12, 1952, Gerald Burdette Bowden was drafted into the U.S. Army and entered active service at Redfield. He was trained at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Before he went overseas on October 20, 1952, Gerald came home for a three-week leave. He left from Fort Lawton, Washington, with Company E, 7th Infantry Division, 17th Infantry Regiment.

Sergeant First Class Gerald Burdette Bowden was first reported missing in action in Korea on July 9, 1953. By this time, the Bowden family had moved again, this time to a farm near Carthage. On July 11, 1954, his designation was changed to killed in action.

There is a memorial stone for Sergeant First Class Bowden at Black Hills National Cemetery near Sturgis and at Punch Bowl in Hawaii. There was also a memorial service for him at Clark, where most of his friends and classmates lived. The following is a part of the report issued on the fate of Gerald Burdette Bowden:

General Military Situation: SFC Bowden was killed during the last Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) offensive in the *Porkchop Hill* sector, a position occupied by the 17th Infantry Regiment, 7th Division. As it became apparent that an armistice agreement would soon be concluded, the CCF made a final all out offensive effort to gain whatever territory they could. During July 1953, over 70,000 CCF/North Korean personnel became war casualties in this last ditch effort. On July 6, at 2200 hours, following a very intense artillery barrage, the Chinese attacked with two battalions and overran the 17th Infantry Regiment outposts on *Porkchop Hill*. The regiment quickly reinforced the defenders with two additional companies. During the night of July 7-8, the regiment launched a counter-attack and achieved limited success. The Chinese rained down a thunderous barrage of artillery and mortar fire at the rate of one round per second in response to this counter-attack. The following evening the Chinese struck again. The 7th Division counter-attacked but, despite a very high casualty rate, the Chinese continued to press the attack. On July 10, Generals Taylor, the Eighth Army Commander, Clarke, the Corps Commander, and Trudeau, the 7th Division Commander, met and determined that the Chinese apparent disregard for casualties and their steadfast desire to hold the outpost outweighed the tactical value of retaining the position. They, therefore, decided to withdraw from *Porkchop Hill*. Personnel who were killed in action during the four-day period of intense fighting for possession of the outpost, in many cases, could not be recovered due to the nature of the fighting and the prevailing tactical situation.

The report goes on to say that “The Persons Missing Korea list cites Sergeant First Class Bowden as killed in action—body not recovered.” He was not on the prisoner of war roster and was not mentioned by U.S. POW returnees after the war. According to the report, “Around 8:30 a.m., he was seen seriously wounded in the leg and the neck in the trenches trying to make his way to the aid station. A grenade exploded at his feet, and he fell in the trench in critical condition, bleeding excessively.” According to the witness report of a soldier who had known SFC Bowden for 7 months, he died on July 9, 1953, from a “bullet wound through his neck.”

The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) provides regular updates to families of the missing. As of 1999, the DPMO was still negotiating with the North Koreans for access to “prisoner of war camps, United Nations Cemeteries, and other battlefield locations.” The *Porkchop Hill* area “is currently problematic due to North Korean national security concerns and the numerous marked and unmarked minefields which significantly increase the risk to U.S. personnel conducting recovery operations.”

Sergeant Bowden was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry, the Purple Heart, the Combat Infantryman’s Badge, the Korean Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and the Korean War Service Medal.

Gerald’s parents are deceased as is his sister, Lou Ann Junker. He is survived by his siblings: Jerry, Hill City; Kip, Huron; Nellie Mae Olson, Phoenix, Arizona; Geraldine Hansen, Madison; Sanna Asmussen, Rapid City; and Sheryl Froiland, Aberdeen.

This entry was respectfully submitted by Sheila Hansen, teacher, Spearfish Middle School, Spearfish, South Dakota, August 9, 2004. Information for this entry was provided by an application for an application for a SD veteran’s bonus and the ABMC. Additional information and profile approval by the Bowden family via Jerry Bowden and Sanna Asmussen.